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LETTER DATED 26 MARCH 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

As a representative of the State chairing the statutory bodies of the Commonwealth of Independent States, I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of a joint statement issued on 25 March 1999 by the Ministers of Defence of the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) S. LAVROV

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Annex

Joint statement issued on 25 March 1999 by the Ministers of Defence of the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States

The decision by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to use force against a sovereign State - the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia - which was taken without the participation of the United Nations Security Council, is contrary to the norms of international law, establishes a precedent for disregarding the Security Council as the supreme body bearing primary responsibility for the maintenance of peace and international security, and also undermines all efforts to achieve a peaceful settlement of the conflict in the region.

The North Atlantic Alliance's commencement of military action in Kosovo destroys the foundations of the international legal order and jeopardizes the very existence of an international organization called the "United Nations".

NATO has utter disregard for the disastrous consequences of its armed intervention in Kosovo both for European security and world politics in general.

The Council of Ministers of Defence of the States members of the Commonwealth of Independent States condemns NATO's inhuman missile and bomb attacks against Yugoslavia, and believes that recourse to the use of force to solve complex inter-ethnic problems in circumvention of the Security Council poses a universal threat to peace and security.

We are convinced that, even now, it is not too late to halt NATO's military machine and resume efforts to find a civilized solution to the Kosovo problem through political means and in conformity with international law. This calls for political will on the part of the international community.